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United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

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News Release

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Habitual Criminal Sentenced to Eighteen Years in Federal Prison

Minneapolis - An habitual criminal from St. Paul, Minnesota, was sentenced to more than eighteen years in federal prison today after earlier pleading guilty to possession with the intent to distribute seven grams of methamphetamine. Michael John Rojas, age 36, was sentenced by United States District Court Judge Joan N. Ericksen to 218 months in prison.

Court documents in this case indicate that during April of 2006, the Metro Gang Strike Force conducted an investigation into the drug trafficking activities of Rojas. On April 10, 2006, as part of that investigation, law enforcement arranged to make a controlled buy of cocaine from him. Later that day surveillance officers observed Rojas leave his St. Paul apartment and drive to the location where the drug transaction was to occur. There Rojas sold cocaine to an individual working with investigators. Following the transaction, Rojas left the area in his Chevy Tahoe. At the request of

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investigators, St. Paul police in a marked squad car attempted to stop the vehicle. Rojas, however, fled the officers. At a high rate of speed, he drove through three stop signs and into an alley before crashing his vehicle into two residential garages, destroying them.

Rojas was taken into custody. A subsequent search of him and his vehicle resulted in the recovery of approximately 258 grams of cocaine as well as some meth. A search warrant then was executed on his St. Paul residence. There law enforcement uncovered \$4,700 in currency; a scale commonly used to weigh narcotics; bottles of Inositol, which is regularly used to cut narcotics; and a small amount of meth.

According to court documents, Rojas had been dealing in significant quantities of meth and cocaine prior to his arrest. And, by engaging police in a high-speed chase on April 10, 2006, he put the lives of officers and private citizens in danger. Specifically, one of the garage owners reported that he had been in the garage with his three-year-old and six-month-old sons just thirty seconds before Rojas crashed into it.

Before being convicted in federal court in this case, Rojas had been convicted in state court on six separate felony charges over a fifteen-year period. Three of those charges were related to illegal drugs and two of them were for criminal sexual conduct. At today's sentencing, Judge Ericksen indicated that Rojas' criminal history, his actions in fleeing police in this matter, and the amount of drugs involved in this case all contributed to the lengthy prison term imposed.

Following the sentencing, United States Attorney Rachel K. Paulose said, "Prosecuting habitual violent criminals in federal court is particularly appropriate given the lengthy sentences available under the federal sentencing guidelines. The defendant in this case, Michael John Rogas,

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has a long history of violent criminal behavior that justifies the sentence meted out to him in federal court today. This Office will continue to prioritize the prosecution of habitual criminals. ”

This case was the result of a multi-jurisdictional cooperative investigation conducted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Metro Gang Strike Force, and the St. Paul Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Chris S. Wilton.

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